



WHAT ARE COLLEGES LOOKING FOR???

The most important thing to remember is that every college is different, therefore each Board of Admission is looking for different attributes in their applicants. Below is a list of criteria which colleges may consider. To find out what is most important to the colleges in your list, we recommend calling the school and talking with someone from the admissions office. If possible, it can be helpful to visit with Admissions representatives if they are in your area.

1. High School Transcript: This is usually the most important credential sent in to colleges. Colleges want to see that you have at least met their minimum requirements, but at the more competitive schools, they are specifically looking for high grades in advanced coursework. Senior grades are also VERY important, so don't fall into the senioritis trap! Class rank, if provided, is also a factor in your review. Remember that different colleges have different ways of reviewing a transcript. Many high schools have adopted pass/fail grading policies as they adjust to remote teaching. Colleges recognize this trend and will review transcripts within the context of the student's school.

2. Standardized Tests: Check with each college to see if it requires the SAT, the ACT, or will take either. Some colleges may require one or more SAT subject tests. Sometimes they are strongly recommended but not required. Once again, check with each college. There has also been a movement toward abandoning the SAT, so some schools may not require it at all. Once again, check with each college.

3. Recommendations: Colleges require a guidance counselor recommendation and usually at least one teacher recommendation. Try to get teacher recommendations from those who know you well and can comment on your personality and work ethic, among other things.

4. Extracurricular Activities: Colleges ask for this information to get a better idea of your level of involvement in your community. It is not necessarily quantity that matters, but rather the quality of involvement. Colleges do not necessarily look for a SPECIFIC type of involvement, although some schools do provide scholarships for certain organizations (i.e. community service involvement or marching band). The bottom line is to make sure you spend your time doing things that are important to you. Many schools and organizations have canceled extracurricular opportunities due to COVID-19. Colleges understand that student engagement may look different than it has in recent years. Colleges still want to know how applicants spend their free time. Students call tell us about hobbies or projects they have pursued.

5. Essay: Colleges usually require at least one essay, and many require more than that. They are used to identify weaknesses or strengths in writing. In addition, they give the student a chance to attach a voice and a personality to the application.

6. Audition/Portfolio: If a student is applying to a performing arts program, one of these is usually required. Check with the college to find out the correct procedure and content. Depending on the strength of the department, the audition or portfolio may be as important as the high school transcript.

7. Diversity: Colleges do like to have diversity on campus. This diversity can be reflected in many ways: socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, religious, geographic, etc.

8. Level of Interest in a School: Some schools, in an attempt to have a lower acceptance rate, will be more inclined to admit a student who has shown a high level of interest because that student is more likely to enroll. Because of this trend, we encourage students to be in contact with schools, visit campuses, attend virtual events and request all sorts of information.

9. Legacy: Some colleges put weight on whether a parent attended the school to which you are applying.

10. Others: Are you a recruited athlete? Are you a first generation college student?

These are the most popular criteria. Keep in mind that certain majors may look for experience in the field (i.e. shadowing a doctor or volunteering in a physical therapy clinic). Also keep in mind that different schools weigh different criteria in different ways. It never hurts to ask.